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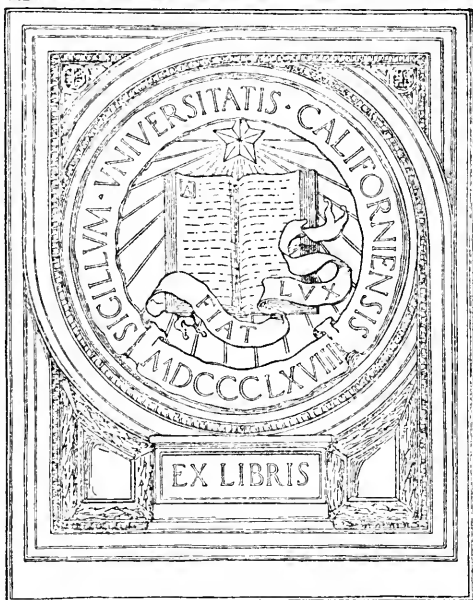


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Character of the Late  
Lord Viscount Sackville

Richard Cumberland

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C H A R A C T E R

OF THE LATE

*LORD VISCOUNT SACKVILLE.*

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HISTORY

# CHARACTER

OF THE LATE

*LORD VISCOUNT SACKVILLE.*

JUL 18 1940

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WHOEVER stands forth as the advocate of a great man's fame, whilst he is living, will hardly gain credit for his motives, be they ever so sincere; but it is to be hoped there is no such risque in describing the real merits of one, whom death has removed from all sense of human kindness, and who has left this world with such prejudices against his memory, that the surviving friend who publishes these truths in his defence, would better consult his own interests by suppressing them.

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As it is an inviolable principle with me, to bring no man's name before the public without committing my own, I have subscribed this paper; and having so done, I hope I may claim belief in the two following assertions;—first, that I have in no instance of my life been a party-writer, or ever published one line in defence of Lord Sackville, or in praise or dispraise of his or any other man's person or politics;—secondly, that in what I now shall say of him, I have spoken the truth conscientiously, to the best of my knowledge and belief, without flattery or disguise.

If malice, which is not apt to spend its shafts upon those who cannot feel the wound, will suffer this testimony to pass undisputed, those who were inclined to think favorably of him will be pleased to find they had grounds for their candour; if otherwise, it will not be the first time that, in the pursuit of truth, I have found myself on the unpopular side of a question.

It was Lord Sackville's fate to act for several years in a responsible office during

an unpopular and unprosperous war. In the evil temper of those times, it is not to be wondered at, if a Minister, at once so efficient and so out of favour with the public, had a full share of personal rancour and animosity from the opponents to his measures. I think however they did not attack him on the score of capacity ; his abilities were probably too well established for their purpose ; but as they could not deny that he was a capable man, they could insinuate that he was a cunning one, and by this misconstruction of truth, though they could not remove it out of their own way, they contrived to turn it against him.

I need not remark how often opinions of men's characters are taken up upon distant and exterior views only ; and it must be confessed that, in this instance, appearances were more in favour of the false impression than of the truth ; for he was of a grave and thoughtful cast, mixed but little with the world at large, and his manners and deportment had not the easy freedom of the present fashion ; he talked

little, and his opinions, being expressed without circumlocution or hesitation, stamped an air of forethought and reflection upon what he said, which might be charged to the account of studied preparation and deliberate design : he gave much matter in few words, and as he seldom, if ever, betrayed a heat of temper, a false conclusion might be drawn, that because he controuled his passions, he disguised his heart : nothing could be more opposite to his real character : the fact is, sincerity was his nature ; reserve, contracted by long exile from society, was the result of his misfortunes.

He was brought up at Westminster school, and took his degrees in the University of Dublin ; but the early avocations of a military life, and perhaps a want of taste and disposition for classical studies, prevented his advances in literature, so that in fact he was not so well read as people of his rank and condition ought to be, and indeed generally are ; but he knew his weakness in this particular, and, tho' a willing hearer when these topics were in conversation,

conversation, never ventured beyond his knowledge. In the modern history of nations, and particularly of his own, he was uncommonly correct; of the memoirs of illustrious persons, interesting anecdotes and events, he had a fertile stock in memory, and with singular precision of facts and dates; of many considerable affairs within his own time he had personal knowledge, many others (and several of a curious and secret nature) he had collected from the best authorities: he had a happy talent for relating, and having always been given to enquiry and research, possessing withal a very retentive memory, he may fairly be accounted one of the very best companions of the age, though he had neither the advantages of literature, the brilliancy of wit, nor any superior pretensions to a fine taste in the elegant arts: it is therefore much to be lamented, that these pleasant and engaging qualifications for society were so sparingly displayed; and that habit had so contracted his circle, that he could not afterwards, without violence to his nature, extend and enlarge it.

*Des* This was constant matter of regret to me through the whole course of my intimacy with him; and I lamented that any man, possessing such a fund of information, with a benevolence of soul that compre-hended all mankind, a temper most placid, and a heart most social, should suffer in the world's opinion by that obscurity, to which his ill fortune, not his natural disposition, had reduced him; for I am verily persuaded that his bitterest defamers, even the anonymous slanderers that raked into the very dregs of infamy and pollution to asperse his character, would have repented had they known him.

He was so little used to receive justice from mankind, that perhaps he was overgrateful for common approbation; and praise, if by chance he ever met it, seemed to take his senses by surprise: if there has been any man therefore, who for selfish purposes assailed his temper by flattery, it was a base and cowardly act; because when we attack a man upon that weak quarter which his misfortunes have left undefended, it is aiming our blows at a wound, when

when we cannot conquer by fair fighting. I state this not so much for the purpose of applying the observation to him, as in general mitigation for human weakness, when a persecuted character has been too rigidly condemned for taking shelter in the soothing flattery of a favorite.

He had enough of that good-natured companionable vanity, which delights in doing what it does well, to be very sufficiently communicative of what he knew; but he was incapable of laying traps for discourse, or putting other people's conversation aside to make room for his own; as he never obtruded, so he never tired: he possessed to admiration that rare faculty of always saying enough, and not too much, on a subject; his observation was so quick, and his feelings so sensitive, that he could nicely discriminate between the pleasure and the politeness of his company, and he never failed to stop before the former was exhausted.

In argumentation no man went sooner to the truth, or submitted to conviction with a better grace: though he had the  
gift

gift of seeing through a question almost at a glance, yet he never suffered his discernment to anticipate another's explanation, or interrupted his argument, how tedious soever : If any one spoke with heat in dispute, or raised his voice above its natural pitch, or if more than one speaker talked at a time, it gave him great pain ; these are defects in temper and manners too commonly met with in the world, but to which he never gave occasion, by pushing an advantage too hard upon any one : a single word, or even an offer at interruption, stopt him in a moment, though in the middle of a sentence ; and this I have seen him bear repeatedly, and in very many different instances, without a symptom of peevishness, taking up his thoughts in the very place where he had left them, and resuming his discourse with perfect complacency. To sift out the truth by discussion seemed his only object for contesting any opinion ; and whether that was attained by the result of his own or another's reasoning, was a discovery he had so little desire to arrogate to his own sagacity, that

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he was very ingenious in shifting it from himself to any other he conversed with ; for he was an adept in that art, which tends to put others in humour with themselves, and which I take to be of the true species of politeness, not laying out for admiration by display.

To his own ideas he was little attached, to words not at all ; and in delivering his thoughts generally chose the plainest and commonest expressions, that could convey their meaning ; in this particular he sometimes fell below the dignity of the subject he was speaking upon ; for it was a point with him on all occasions, to take the straightest road to his object, rather than a circuitous one, though ever so flowery. I believe he was never guilty, either in public or private, of speaking for fame, or setting off a discourse that means nothing with an air of pomp and mystery ; he had a dry way of stripping such declamations to search for facts, and would assert that fine words were not meant to be understood ; but was particularly pleased when merchants or men of business explained

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naturally to his comprehension ; and when state-measures were to be communicated to any such for their guidance and instruction, he expressed himself in the same natural manner, openly and fairly, without affectation, ambitious only to be thoroughly understood as to what would be done, and what would not be done, so that they might thereupon determine what was most adviseable for their own interests and concerns. In perspicuity he has never been excelled, in proof of which I believe it is not remembered in Parliament (and probably not in Council), that he was ever called upon a second time to explain what he had left obscure and imperfect ; his errors, on the contrary, were the errors of sincerity ; and I dare say there have been moments, when his colleagues in office could have forgiven him, if he had been less direct and explicit in reply ; but if he was not to be stiled a fine speaker, he was a very ready firm debater, and though he never dealt in flowery periods, made no attack upon the passions, no studied declamations, yet he had great judgment and method

method in his argument, saw the strong and the feeble<sup>^</sup> of a question with much penetration, knew what he ought to press, and where he ought to give way; and in giving measures a facility, by the choice of the best moment for their introduction or prosecution, no man had more skill and address.

He was generally represented as a proud and distant man, but in fact he had no more pride at heart, than every man of honour carries about him, and which serves to repel every thing that inclines towards meanness with becoming indignation; upon first approaches he had certainly an air of reserve, tempered however with much politeness, for he was a high-bred gentleman, or would have been so esteemed at least in any age but the present, for his manners, it must be owned, were not the manners of the reigning fashion; his reserve however, which was more of a pensive than proud complexion, soon wore off in conversation, and he was speedily disposed, from the openness of his own heart, to credit others for the sincerity of

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theirs : He was so far from a cunning man, that, considering the danger of late times, and the delicacy of the affairs he was engaged in, I doubt if he was always sufficiently cautious ; if he had not had a quick insight into characters, he was naturally more direct than would have been safe with respect to himself, or consistent with his situation,

He had all the requisites of a great minister, unless popularity and good luck are to be numbered amongst them : In punctuality, precision, dispatch and integrity, he was not to be surpassed ; he was fitted both by habit and temper for business ; no man could have fewer avocations, whether natural or artificial, for he was slave to no passion or excess, indulged no humour, unless that of regularity may be called a humour, which he observed to a scrupulous minuteness ; and as for his domestic affairs, they were in such a train of order and œconomy, that they demanded little of his attention : He had studied the finances of the nation, and her resources both in war and peace ; had taken uncommon pains

pains to obtain authentic and early intelligence of the councils and operations of foreign states, and readily discerned how the interests of this country were affected thereby. He was of an active indefatigable mind: intemperance never disturbed his faculties; neither avarice nor ambition corrupted them; easy in his private circumstances, and totally void of every wish to accumulate, his zeal for his country, and his application to business, were not subject to be diverted from their proper exertions: A scene of activity was what he delighted in, for he was full of operation and project, and of a spirit so incapable of despondency, that difficulties and dangers, which would have depressed some men, served to animate him.

In the interchange of confidence with him it was necessary to have no reserve or holding back of circumstances, for he had such power of seeing into the heart of hypocrisy, and his own was so free from duplicity, that on such occasions you must impart the whole or nothing; when this was fairly done, he was your own to all honest

honest intents, and (humanly speaking) to all time; for he was a steady faithful friend: His mind was so strong, that it could not easily be overburthened by the weight of affairs, so clear that the variety of them was not apt to perplex it: He could shift his attention from one thing to its opposite with singular facility; he wished to do business, not to dwell upon it; and as his punctuality, as I before observed, went with the hand of the clock to the very point of the minute, he was pleasant to all who served with him, or were dependant on his motions, and their hours of relaxation were hours of security.

The establishment of his household and domestics was upon a noble scale, in fact it was the model of a liberal œconomy: He was a friend and father to his servants; their health, their exercises and even their amusements, were objects of his attention, and a more orderly and happy family did not exist. When I speak of his bounty and humanity to his poor neighbours and dependants in the counties where he resided, it is with pleasure

I insist

I insist on so meritorious a part of his character. Charity was in him no less the exercise of the judgment than of the heart, for he gave his relief to the real wants, not to the mere importunities of the needy: money was seldom the vehicle he employed to convey that relief; a constant resource in sickness, casualty, or misfortune, was to be found with him, and it was part of his family establishment to be always provided for such occasions: As his eye was ever upon the poor, all their comforts, their industry, and even their morals, passed under his inspection, and were influenced by it; his charity was without ostentation, and the extent of his good deeds could only be computed by the lamentations and number of those who followed his body to the grave.

The same Providence, that gave him strength to endure, laid afflictions upon him to put that strength to the trial: I am warranted in saying they neither hardened his heart, depressed his spirit, nor soured his temper: It was his countenance, not his tongue, that ever uttered a complaint;

his

his friends were welcomed with the same hospitable smile, and his family enjoyed the same unchangeable serenity under all events; if persecution and unkindness had been capable of relenting, his patience would have moved them to it.

The cry of the world is not always the opinion of the world, at least not of the wisest part of it; the records are in hand, and the facts cannot be perverted or evaded, by which future times must decide, whether he, who was so chief an actor in those unhappy scenes, and bore such a proportion of the public odium during the war of the Colonies, shall receive the praise or censure of posterity: He will not enter upon his share in that unfortunate history, till the whole was in action and hastening to its catastrophe; in the antecedent measures, which have such connexion with the causes and precipitation of the revolt, he has no concern; he properly shares the responsibility of that Cabinet of which he was a member; and if there was any negligence or error, any want of proper dispatch and exertion, any corruption, ignorance,



ignorance, or abuse, within his particular department, for all such (if any there were) he is singly answerable; hitherto we have heard little but the language of prejudice; a short time will bring the question fairly into judgment, and when the heat of passion has subsided, truth will state, and reason will decide.

There are other unfortunate events in his life, which must be referred to the same distant test and examination. They, who have served with him in the war preceding the last, are best able to speak of his military anecdotes: he served with great reputation under the Dukes of Cumberland and Marlborough, in Germany, Scotland, and France; there are passages enough in his campaigns, which put his courage out of all dispute; I think it is unnecessary to produce them merely for the object of confuting a slanderous insinuation, which none but vulgar minds could adopt, and which was never echoed for any purposes but of temporary defamation. He was shot in the breast at the head of Barrel's regiment in the memorable battle of

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Fontenoy,

Fontenoy, and saw that brave regiment almost totally cut to pieces; if I am rightly informed, only three officers marched unwounded off the field: at the battle of Minden, he was marked by implication in the public orders of Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick; he appealed to a court-martial, was tried, sentenced, and disgraced. I have no further concern with this or any other event of his life, but as it may involve some good or evil quality of his mind, and affect his private character; in this light I presume it is not improper to compare his situation in the two actions above mentioned, especially where a crime has been suggested against him, very foreign from his nature, and very different from the reasons upon which he suffered sentence; this, and this only, is the point to which I address myself; not to his rightful judges, for that would be the height of indecency, but to those who, without right to judge, condemned without reason; and to such I may be allowed to say, that the situation of Lord Sackville, commanding a single regiment at Fontenoy,

under

under an English prince and general, was very different from his situation at Minden, commanding the British forces under a foreign prince and general : in the former case his duty was only that of an officer ; it was simply to fight, and to obey, and that duty he performed ; in the latter his duty was that of a general, accountable to his country for something more than his conduct in the hour of battle, for his counsels and opinions, and many other complicated and delicate affairs, in all which a man, whose zeal for the peculiar interests of his own country exceeded any considerations that respected himself only, must be subjected to dangers that need not be pointed out ; in such circumstances a subordinate general, though of the same nation with his superior, has not always thought in harmony with him, and I believe the consequences have generally proved fatal to one party or the other.

I have seen him in moments of imminent danger, both personal and political, and never had occasion to doubt of the firmness of his mind ; I know not how

else he could have supported himself against such continued persecution : I think this circumstance alone would mark his fortitude to the conviction of every considerate man, for his deportment was exactly such as innocence and a clear conscience will inspire ; there was no insolence, no ferocity in it, such as detected characters can assume, when they have cast away shame, and hardened themselves against infamy ; his serenity, on the contrary, accompanied him through life, and was particularly conspicuous at the close of it.

He underwent an irksome opposition, when the favour of his sovereign promoted him to a seat in the House of Peers : it was one of the last and most painful trials of his life : the transaction is so recent, that I may be excused from any further mention of it. He did not long enjoy his hard-earned honours. He supported the king's ministers in all public measures, except those relative to the Irish propositions, in which he took a part, not of purposed opposition, but of fair and deliberate opinion ; he had given his best and  
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fullest

fullest attention to the subject in all its branches, and expected its issue with the utmost anxiety. Some time before the conclusion of the session he was seized with the symptoms of his last illness, in which stage of his complaint, if he could have been persuaded to retire from his duty in parliament, he might probably have found a remedy in the air and retirement of the country ; but he persisted so long in his attendance upon this important business, that his complaint gathered upon him, and his pains grew so troublesome, that when he came at last into the country, he did not experience that relief which was hoped for; notwithstanding this, although repose was so necessary for his condition, his zeal carried him again to town in a very unfit state for the undertaking: he spoke upon the question with greater agitation of mind, and more at length, than was common with him, and the house being hot and crowded, he found himself so exhausted at the conclusion of his speech, that it was with difficulty he was saved from fainting on the spot: the sitting was  
very

very long, and he returned to his family very materially altered in his health for the worse.

From this period he considered his case as without cure, feeling those symptoms of internal decay which he was satisfied were beyond the reach of medicine ; in this persuasion, he even apologized to his physician for the fruitless trouble he was giving him : he endured a succession of wearisome pains with singular serenity and composure of mind ; his senses were firm and unimpaired to the last ; and he was occupied almost without intermission in fulfilling the duties of a father, a friend, and a Christian\* : it should seem as if all  
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\* I was present whilst the Holy Sacrament was administered to him, two days before his death : he caused his windows and bed-curtains to be thrown open, and exerted himself to the utmost on that awful occasion ; he received the Elements with a devotion and fervor, expressive of such inward peace and even gladness of heart, as are the strongest of all human evidences of an easy conscience and a well-prepared mind. His last words to me are a further indication of this, and, as nearly as I can repeat them, were as follow — “ You see me now in those moments, when  
“ no

the preceding sorrows of his life were repaid to him by that extraordinary support and comfort which Providence vouchsafed to him in his last days. It is not in my remembrance, through the course of my acquaintance with him, ever to have heard a word from his lips that could give offence to decency or religion; but in this latter period, of which I am speaking; and throughout which I constantly attended him, his sentiments were of that exalted and superior kind, as to render the spectacle of his death one of the most edifying contemplations of my life.

I have now the pleasing satisfaction to know, that it was not without reason I thought well of one, whom too many conspired to traduce. Having survived my friend, I now enjoy the only reward which  
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“ no disguise will serve, and when the spirit of a man  
 “ must be proved; I have a mind perfectly resigned,  
 “ and at peace within itself: I have no more to do  
 “ with this world, and what I have done in it, I have  
 “ done for the best; I hope and trust I am prepared  
 “ for the next. Tell not me of all that passes in health  
 “ and pride of heart, these are the moments in which  
 “ a man must be searched;—and remember, that I die,  
 “ as you see me, happy and content.”

a disinterested attachment can look to—the reward of finding the opinion I had conceived of his virtues justified to my own conviction; and of being conscious that I am strictly fulfilling the duties of an honest man, when I lay before the public this small but sincere tribute to his memory.

*RICHARD CUMBERLAND.*





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